

REMARKS

OF

MR. DOUGLAS, OF ILLINOIS,

UPON


THE RESOLUTION DECLARING THE COMPROMISE
MEASURES TO BE A DEFINITIVE ADJUST-
MENT OF ALL QUESTIONS GROW-
ING OUT OF DOMESTIC
SLAVERY.

DELIVERED IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, DECEMBER 23, 1851.

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MR. PRESIDENT: It is not my intention to go into an elaborate discussion of the measures known as the Compromise, nor of the resolution presented by the Senator from Mississippi, (Mr. FOOTE.) At the close of the long session which adopted those measures, I resolved never to make another speech upon the slavery question in the halls of Congress. I regard all discussion of that question here as unwise, mischievous, and out of place. Yet in the course of this debate certain points have been presented to the public view in connexion with my course which require me briefly to respond; and if, in doing so, I am constrained to refer somewhat in detail to myself, my votes, speeches, and general course of conduct, I trust it will be attributed to no spirit of egotism on my part, but to the necessity imposed upon me by others to vindicate my action and character.

The Senator from Texas, (Mr. HOUSTON,) in the course of his speech, took occasion to say that he was the only Senator now holding a seat upon this floor who voted for all the measures of compromise. That may be so, for aught I know to the contrary. But the inference drawn from that remark, and the distinct idea conveyed by it, do great injustice to me, and perhaps to other Senators. I voted, sir, for all the measures of the compromise but one; and I undertake to say, in regard to that one, that it was well known to the Senate before the measure passed, and at the time it passed, and has been distinctly proclaimed to the country since, that I would have voted for the fugitive slave law if I could have been in the Senate at the time, and that I was anxious to be here for the purpose of casting that vote. I say it was distinctly known, because I had so declared in debate prior to the passage of that act; because every Senator on both sides of the

chamber who conversed with me knew that I was friendly to the measure; and because when I returned home, before my own constituents, I assumed the responsibility of an affirmative vote upon the bill. Yet, sir, the imputation has been repeatedly made by implication on this floor, and in express terms by the partisan journals, that all those whose names are not recorded on the passage of the bill dodged the question! Whatever political sins I may at any time have committed, I think I may safely assert that no Senator ever doubted my willingness to assume the full measure of responsibility resulting from my official position. The dodging of votes—the attempt to avoid responsibility—is no part of my system of political tactics. And yet, sir, the special organ of the Administration has on several occasions accused me, in connexion with the distinguished Senator from Michigan, with having dodged the vote on this bill. In order to put this accusation to rest, once for all, now and forever, I have concluded to give a detailed account of the circumstances which occasioned my absence at the time the bill passed, although it may subject me to the mortification of exposing my private and pecuniary affairs to the public view. I had a pecuniary obligation, maturing in New York, for near four thousand dollars, in payment of property which I had purchased in Chicago. Apprehending that my public duties with reference to these very compromise questions might render it improper to leave the city when the day of payment arrived, I made an arrangement with Mr. Maury, president of the Bank of Metropolis, to arrange the matter for me temporarily until my official duties would enable me to give it my personal attention. Feeling entirely secure under this arrangement, I thought no more of it until, on the day the debt became due, I received a note from Mr. Maury expressing his deep regret and mortification that, in consequence of the unexpected absence of a majority of the directors of his bank on that day, he was unable to carry out the arrangement. I thus found myself suddenly placed in the position in which I was compelled to go to New York instantly, or to suffer my note to be protested, and the commercial credit of my endorser to be greatly impaired. I immediately passed around the chamber, and inquired of several Senators on each side friendly to the fugitive bill whether I could venture to be absent three or four days for the purpose of attending to this item of business, and I received from them the uniform answer that the discussion would continue at least a week, and probably two weeks longer, before the voting could begin. Relying implicitly upon this assurance, I went from the Senate chamber directly to the cars, and, riding all night, arrived in New York the next day. Meeting several Illinois friends there, I was enabled to meet the obligation, and avoid a protest during the three days' grace allowed me by law. While dining with these friends at the Astor House on the day I had concluded my business, one of them alluded to the fact that the fugitive bill had

been ordered to be engrossed for a third reading in the Senate. I expressed my surprise, and doubted the correctness of the statement. He then showed me the paper containing the telegraphic announcement, when I immediately rose from the table, and told my friends that I must leave for Washington that afternoon, in order to be able to *vote for the bill on its final passage* the next day. I will take the liberty of mentioning the names of some of the gentlemen to whom this announcement was made. Among them was Judge Dickey, of the northern circuit of Illinois; Mr. McElroy, the district attorney; Mr. Cook, the sheriff of Cook county; and, I believe, Mr. Gurnee, the present mayor of the city of Chicago, and several others of the most respectable citizens of my State. I left New York in the five o'clock train that afternoon, and, after riding all night, on my arrival here the next day, I found that the final vote had been taken the day previous. I immediately consulted with my colleague, now present, (Mr. SHIELDS,) who authorizes me to say that he distinctly recollects the conversation in which I expressed my deep regret that I could not have arrived here in time to vote for the bill, and that I intended then to ask of the Senate permission to explain the causes of my absence; in reply to which my colleague suggested that such an explanation would be entirely unnecessary, for the reason that it was well known to the Senate and the country that I was in favor of the bill; and for the further reason that in all probability the bill would undergo some amendment in the House of Representatives, which would require it to be returned to the Senate for concurrence, when I would have an opportunity not only speaking but of voting for the bill. I acquiesced in this suggestion of my colleague, and for that reason made no explanation at that time. A few days afterwards, as you well know, (Mr. SHIELDS being in the chair,) and as many other Senators may recollect, I was taken ill, and rendered incapable of being in the Senate but a few times during the residue of the session. I was confined to my bed for several weeks, extending beyond the adjournment, having been rendered a cripple by a surgical operation on one hip. So soon as I was able to be removed, I was taken home under the care and kind attention of one of my colleagues of the House of Representatives. Everywhere on my route I found the most boisterous and determined opposition to the fugitive law; but nowhere was the excitement so fierce and terrific as at Chicago, where I had recently taken up my residence. There the press and the pulpit had joined in the work of misrepresentation and denunciation. A spirit of determined resistance had been incited, and seemed to pervade the whole community. The common council of the city, in its official capacity, had passed resolutions denouncing the fugitive slave law as a violation of the law of God and the Constitution of the United States, calling upon the police of the city to disregard it, and the citizens not to obey it. The next night a meeting of 2,000

people assembled; and in that meeting, in the midst of the most terrific applause, it was determined to defy "death, the dungeon, and the grave," in resistance to the execution of the law. I walked into that meeting, and from the stand gave notice that on the next night I would appear there and defend every measure of the compromise, and especially the fugitive slave law, from each and every objection urged to it; and I called upon the entire people of the city to come and hear me. I told that body of men there assembled, in the face of their denunciations and of their threats, that I was right and they were wrong, and if they would come and hear me, I would prove it to them.

The next night, in the presence of 4,000 people, in that immense hall, with the city council and the abolitionists occupying positions in front of the stand, which was partially surrounded in the rear by a large body of armed negroes, including many fugitive slaves, I stood, and made the speech which I now hold in my hand, and which I caused to be laid upon the table of every Senator and of every Representative at the opening of the last session of Congress. In that speech, if any Senator will take the trouble to read it, he will find that I assumed the responsibility of an affirmative vote on the passage of the law, and made the same explanation of the causes of my absence that I have given to-day, and called upon the gentlemen whose names I have stated to the Senate as having been in New York with me when the vote was taken, and who were in the meeting when the Chicago speech was made, to confirm my statement in regard to my absence, and my wish at that time to vote for the law. You will also find in that speech that I vindicate the law in respect to both its constitutionality and necessity; that I defend it as a whole, and in all its parts; that I answer every objection that has ever been urged against it. The objections relating to the right of trial by jury, to the writ of *habeas corpus*, to records from other States, to the fees of the commissioners, to the pains and penalties, to the "higher law"—every objection which the ingenuity and fanaticism of abolitionism could invent was fully and conclusively answered in that speech—at least to the satisfaction of that vast assemblage of people. I am extremely reluctant to speak of the effect of my own speeches; but it is a part of the history of that transaction that the meeting, comprising three-fourths of all the legal voters of the city, a majority of whom had the night previously pledged themselves to open and violent resistance, after the speech was concluded, *unanimously adopted a series of resolutions in favor of sustaining and carrying into effect every provision of the Constitution and laws in respect to the surrender of fugitive slaves*. The resolutions were written and submitted to the meeting by myself, and cover the entire ground. I will only detain the Senate while I read one or two of them, and refer to the pamphlet copy of the speech for the whole series:

“Resolved, That so long as the Constitution of the United States provides that all persons held to serve or labor in one State, escaping into another State, ‘SHALL BE DELIVERED UP on the claim of the party to whom the service or labor may be due,’ and so long as members of Congress are required to take an oath to support the Constitution, it is their solemn and religious duty to pass all laws necessary to carry that provision of the Constitution into effect.

“Resolved, That we will stand or fall by the American Union and its Constitution, with all its compromises, with its glorious memories of the past and precious hopes of the future.”

The city council having nullified the law, and denounced me and all other supporters of it as traitors, Benedict Arnolds, and Judas Iscariots, Mr. Morris offered the following resolution, which was also adopted:

“Resolved, That we, the people of Chicago, repudiate the resolutions passed by the common council of Chicago upon the subject of the fugitive slave law passed by Congress at its last session.”

It only remains for me to state that the same city council assembled on the next night, and repealed their nullifying resolutions by a vote of twelve to one.

Now, Mr. President, I have given you a detailed account of my course in relation to the fugitive law. I have no comments to make upon it. I submit the facts, and leave the Senate and country to draw their own conclusions. These facts are not now submitted for the first time. They are contained in the pamphlet copy of the Chicago speech, which I hold in my hand, and which, I repeat, was laid on the table of every Senator and Representative more than a year ago, and fifty thousand copies were distributed by Senators and Representatives to every portion of the Union. I may also be permitted to add that, so far as my knowledge or belief extends, this was the first published speech ever made in a free State in defence of the fugitive law, and the Chicago meeting was the first public assemblage in any free State that determined to support and sustain it. At Chicago the reaction commenced. There rebellion and treason received their first check, the fanatical and revolutionary spirit was rebuked, and the supremacy of the Constitution and laws asserted and maintained. I claim no credit for the part I acted. I did no more than my duty as a citizen and a Senator. I claim to have done my duty, and for that I was entitled to exemption from the repeated charges by the special organ of the Administration, and other partisan prints, of having dodged the question. I never dodge a question. I never shrink from any responsibility which my position and duty justly devolve upon me. I never hesitate to give an unpopular vote, or to meet an indignant community, when I know I am right. My political opponents in my own State have never made such a charge against me, and I feel that upon this point I can appeal to the Senate with perfect safety for a unanimous verdict in my favor.

Mr. President, while I am engaged in the work of self-defence, I will refer to one other point. I have recently seen it stated in

several papers that at some time, and on some occasion, I had been the advocate and supporter of the Wilmot proviso. This charge, upon investigation, will be found to be as unjust and unfounded as that in regard to the fugitive law. In order to put the question to rest and beyond dispute forever, I will take a brief review of my course on the whole slavery agitation, and show clearly and distinctly the principles by which my action upon the subject has always been governed. It is no part of my purpose on the present occasion to vindicate the correctness of my views and principles, but simply to show what they are, and what my official acts have been, in order that the public may judge for themselves. I have always opposed the introduction of the subject of slavery into the halls of Congress for any purpose—either for discussion or action—except in the cases specified and enjoined by the Constitution of the United States, as in the case of the reclamation of fugitives from labor. The first important vote I ever gave in the House of Representatives was in favor of the rule excluding abolition petitions, and my vote stands recorded against its repeal at the time it was abolished. My action here since I have been a member of the Senate has been governed by the same principle. Whenever the slavery agitation has been forced upon us, I have always met it fairly, directly, and fearlessly, and endeavored to apply the proper remedy. Whether the remedy proposed by me has always been the wisest and most appropriate is a fair subject of discussion, and will doubtless give rise to a wide diversity of opinion. When the stormy agitation arose in connexion with the annexation of Texas, I originated and first brought forward the Missouri Compromise as applicable to that Territory, and had the gratification to see it incorporated in the bill which annexed Texas to the United States. I did not deem it a matter of much moment as applicable to Texas alone; but I did conceive it to be of vast importance in view of the probable acquisition of New Mexico and California. My preference for the Missouri Compromise was predicated on the assumption that the whole people of the United States would be more easily reconciled to that measure than to any other mode of adjustment; and this assumption rested upon the fact that the Missouri Compromise had been the means of an amicable settlement of a fearful controversy in 1821, which had been acquiesced in cheerfully and cordially by the people for more than a quarter of a century, and which all parties and sections of the Union professed to respect and cherish as a fair, just, and honorable adjustment. I could discover no reason for the application of the Missouri line to all the territory owned by the United States in 1821 that would not apply with equal force to its extension to the Rio Grande and also to the Pacific, so soon as we should acquire the country. In accordance with these views, I brought forward the Missouri Compromise at the session of 1844-'45 as applicable to Texas, and had the satisfaction to see it adopted. Subsequently, after the

war with Mexico had commenced, and when, in August, 1846, Mr. Wilmot first introduced his proviso, I proposed to extend the Missouri Compromise to the Pacific as a substitute for the Wilmot proviso. When the proviso was voted into the two-million bill in opposition to my vote, I voted against the bill—which I would otherwise have supported—because the proviso was there. Again, in 1847, when the proviso was voted into the three million bill, I voted against the bill for the same reason. The next time I had the opportunity of voting on the proviso was in the spring of 1848; in the Senate, pending the ratification of the treaty of peace with Mexico, when it was offered as an amendment to the treaty, I believe by a Senator from Connecticut, now not a member of this body. The record shows that I here again voted against the proviso. This was the last vote ever taken on the Wilmot proviso—the last that ever could be taken upon it as applicable to the country acquired from Mexico, for the reason that by this treaty we acquired the country without any such condition as that proposed by Mr. Wilmot. It should be borne in mind that the Wilmot proviso not only proposed to prohibit slavery in the Territories while they remained Territories, but also went further, and proposed to insert a stipulation in the treaty with a foreign power pledging the faith of the nation that slavery should never exist in the country acquired, either while it remained in the condition of Territories, or after it should have been admitted into the Union as States on an equal footing with the original States. I denounced this proviso as being unwise, improper, and unconstitutional; I never voted for it, and publicly declared that I never would vote for it, even under the pressure of instructions. The Wilmot proviso being thus disposed of forever, and California and New Mexico having been acquired without any condition or stipulation in respect to slavery, the question arose as to what kind of territorial governments should be established for those countries. A domestic affliction suddenly called me from the capital, and detained me several weeks. On my return I found pending before the Senate the measure known as the Clayton bill. Its provisions were not such as I would have proposed as chairman of the Territorial Committee had I been present. Yet it had the high merit of having been reported with great unanimity by a special committee of the most eminent and distinguished members of the Senate, fairly representing all the different sections and interests of the Union. This fact afforded reason for the hope that the bill might receive the sanction of both houses of Congress, and thus put an end to the controversy. Under the influence of these considerations, the bill received my cordial support, and passed the Senate by an overwhelming majority, but was promptly rejected in the House of Representatives. The controversy being reopened with increased violence, and my position at the head of the Territorial Committee requiring me to take the initiative in some plan of fair and just settlement, I

brought forward my original proposition to extend the Missouri Compromise to the Pacific in the same sense and with the same understanding with which it was originally adopted. This proposition met the approbation of the Senate, and passed this body by a large majority, but was instantly rejected in the House of Representatives by a still larger majority. The day of adjournment having arrived, no further efforts were made to adjust the difficulty during that session. At the opening of the next session, upon consultation with the friends of the measure, it was generally conceded—with, perhaps, here and there an individual exception—that there was no hope left for the Missouri Compromise, and consequently some other plan of adjustment must be devised. I was reluctant to give up the Missouri Compromise, having been the first to bring it forward, and having struggled for it in both houses of Congress for about five years. But public duty demanded that all considerations of pride of character and of opinion should be made subservient to the public peace and tranquillity. I gave it up—reluctantly, to be sure—and conceived the idea of a bill to admit California as a State, leaving the people to form a constitution and settle the question of slavery afterwards to suit themselves. I submitted this bill to the then President of the United States, (Mr. Polk,) and have the satisfaction of stating that it received his sanction, and was introduced by me with his approbation. The great argument in favor of this bill was, that it recognised the right of the people to determine all questions relating to their domestic concerns in their own way, and authorized them to do so uninfluenced by executive dictation, or by the apprehension that, unless they decided the slavery question in a particular way, their application for admission would be rejected by Congress. I do not endorse, and never did sanction, the charge against the late administration of having used improper means, or any means, to influence the decision of the people of California upon this question; but I do say, that had this bill become the law of the land no such charge would ever have been made or suspicion entertained. The great misfortune is, that a large portion of the South really believe that improper influences were used to produce the result in California. They do not deny the right of the people of California to make that decision; but they insist that the right should have been exercised freely, and uninfluenced by any act of the agents of the Administration, or of the apprehension of an adverse decision by Congress in the event that they had decided the slavery question otherwise. But, Mr. President, the Judiciary Committee reported against and the Senate refused to pass my bill to admit California as a State, leaving the question of slavery open to be decided afterwards by the people, and thus cut off all hope of adjustment in that mode. According to my recollection, the next important measure which promised the slightest hope of giving peace to the country was the proposition of the Senator from Wisconsin, which is usually known as the

"Walker amendment." All other plans having failed, as a last hope I came warmly into the support of that proposition, and struggled for its adoption through that terrible night session, as many Senators will recollect.

This brief history brings us down to the commencement of that memorable long session when the late compromise measures were adopted. Mr. President, I may be permitted here to pause and remark that during the period of five years that I was laboring for the adoption of the Missouri Compromise, my votes on the Oregon question, and upon all incidental questions touching slavery, were given with reference to a settlement on that basis, and are consistent with it. If, therefore, any gentleman has the curiosity or wish to understand the meaning of any or all the votes I had occasion to give during that period on this question, he has only to bear in mind the Missouri Compromise, and then observe the perfect harmony between each vote and that measure.

Now, sir, I approach the history of the compromise measures. My account will be brief and easily understood. Having again been placed by the Senate at the head of the Territorial Committee, it became my duty to prepare and submit some plan of adjustment. Early in December, within the first two or three weeks of the session, I wrote, and laid before my committee for their examination and approval, two bills—one for the admission of California into the Union, and the other containing three distinct measures: first, for the establishment of a territorial government for Utah; second, for the establishment of a territorial government for New Mexico; and, third, for the settlement of the Texas boundary. These bills remained before the Committee on Territories from the month of December until the 25th of March before I could obtain the consent of the committee to report them. On that day I reported those bills, each member of the committee reserving the right to oppose any portion of them his judgment should disapprove of, and I being the only member who was responsible for all the provisions of those two bills. Those bills were on my motion ordered to be printed, and laid on the table of each member of both houses of Congress. These printed bills having laid on your table about four weeks, the Senate, on motion of Mr. FOOTE, appointed a committee of thirteen, with the distinguished Senator from Kentucky (Mr. CLAY) at its head. That committee took my two printed bills, joined them together with a wafer, and reported them to the Senate as one bill—which is well known to the country as the "*omnibus bill*." If any gentleman has the curiosity to investigate this matter, he can walk to the Secretary's table and inspect the original omnibus bill. He will find that it consists of two printed bills with a wafer between them, and a black line drawn through the words "Mr. DOUGLAS, from the Committee on Territories," and in lieu of them are inserted these other words: "Mr. CLAY, from the Committee of Thirteen," reported the following bill. The committee had also

made some slight and comparatively unimportant amendments, nearly all of which were disagreed to by the Senate. The Committee of Thirteen, therefore, did not originate or write any one measure contained in the omnibus. They availed themselves of the labors of the Committee on Territories, and their distinguished chairman did us the justice so to state at the time he reported the bill. The Committee of Thirteen put a wafer between our bills, and the Senate took out the wafer and passed them separately. I supported the omnibus as a joint measure. I also supported each measure separately. I had no pride of opinion that the bills should be passed in the precise form I had reported them. I desired to see the controversy terminated, and was willing to take the measures jointly or separately, or in any form in which they could pass both Houses of Congress. I reported them separately because I had ascertained the fact from actual count that they could pass separately and could never pass jointly.

Mr. President, I claim no credit for having originated and proposed the measures contained in the omnibus. There was no peculiar or remarkable feature in them. They were merely ordinary measures of legislation, well adapted to the circumstances, and their sole merit consisted in the fact that separately they could pass both Houses of Congress. Being responsible for these bills, as they came from the hands of the Committee on Territories, I wish to call the attention of the Senate and of the country to the fact that they contained no prohibition of slavery—no provision upon the subject. And now I come to the main point, which explains the object of the detailed statement which I have just made. The Legislature of Illinois, by a combination of every Whig in each house, with a few free-soil Democrats, had passed a resolution instructing me to vote for a bill for the government of the territory acquired from Mexico which should contain an express prohibition of slavery in said territory. The instruction did not go to the extent of the Wilmot proviso, by attempting to prohibit slavery in the States as well as the Territories, but the movers of it contented themselves with the provision that slavery should be prohibited in the Territories while they remained such, leaving the people to do as they pleased when they became a State. Yet the instruction was designed and deemed sufficient to compel me to resign my seat and give place to a free-soiler, for there could have been no expectation of their electing a Whig. They knew my inflexible opposition to the principle asserted in the instruction, at the same time that they knew that the right of instruction was the settled doctrine of both parties in my State, which no man could repudiate with safety. Knowing that this combination of Whigs and free-soilers flattered themselves that they had succeeded in a party trick which would drive me from the Senate and give place to a free-soiler who would come here and carry out abolition doctrines, I confess that they would have succeeded in their plot had I been certain that all the measures

of the Compromise could have passed without my vote and in opposition to the vote of an abolitionist in my place. Notwithstanding these instructions, I wrote the bills and reported them from the Committee on Territories without the prohibitions, in order that the record might show what my opinions were; but, lest the trick might fail, a free-soil Senator offered an amendment in the precise language of my instructions. I knew that the amendment could not prevail, even if my colleague and myself recorded the vote of our State in its favor.

But if I resigned my place to an abolitionist, it was almost certain that the bills would fail on their passage. After consulting with my colleague and with many Senators friendly to the bills, I came to the conclusion that duty required that I should retain my seat. I was prepared to fight and defy abolitionism in all its form, but I was not willing to repudiate the settled doctrine of my State in regard to the right of instruction. Before the vote was taken, I made a speech reviewing my course on the slavery question and defining my position. I denounced the doctrine of the amendment, declared my unalterable opposition to it, and gave notice that any vote which might be recorded in my name seemingly in its favor would be the vote of those who gave the instructions, and not my own. Under this protest, I recorded a vote for this and one or two other amendments embracing the same principle, and then renewed my protest against them, and gave notice that I should not hold myself responsible for them. Immediately on my return home to my constituents, and in that same Chicago speech to which I have referred, I renewed my protest against those votes, and repeated the notice to that excited and infuriated meeting that they were their votes and not mine. I will detain the Senate a moment while I read a passage from that speech. Speaking of the territorial bills, I say:

"These measures are predicated on the great fundamental principle that every people ought to possess the right of forming and regulating their own internal concerns and domestic institutions in their own way. It was supposed that those of our fellow-citizens who emigrated to the shores of the Pacific and to our other Territories were as capable of self-government as their neighbors and kindred whom they left behind them; and there was no reason for believing that they have lost any of their intelligence or patriotism by the wayside, while crossing the isthmus or the plains. It was also believed that after arrival in the country, when they had become familiar with its topography, climate, productions, and resources, and had connected their destiny with it, they were fully as competent to judge for themselves what kind of laws and institutions were best adapted to their condition and interests as we were who never saw the country and knew very little about it. To question their competency to do this was to deny their capacity for self-government. If they have the requisite intelligence and honesty to be intrusted with the enactment of laws for the government of white men, I know of no reason why they should not be deemed competent to legislate for the negro. If they are sufficiently enlightened to make laws for the protection of life, liberty, and property, of morals and education—to determine the relation of husband and wife, of parent and child—I am not aware that it requires any higher degree of civilization to regulate the affairs of master and servant. These things are all confided by the Constitution to each State to decide for itself, and I know of no reason why the same principle should not be extended to the Territories. My votes and acts have been in accordance with these views in all cases, except in the instances in which I voted under your instructions. Those were your votes, and not mine. *I entered my protest against them at the time—before and after they were recorded—AND SHALL NEVER HOLD MYSELF RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM.*"

This speech was immediately printed, and circulated all over the State. I at the same time travelled over a good portion of the States, and made many speeches of the same tenor, the last of which was made in the capital of our State. A few weeks afterwards, the legislature assembled, and one of their first acts was to repeal the resolutions of instructions to which I have referred, and to pass resolutions approving of the course of my colleague and myself on the compromise measures, by a vote of three or four to one. From that day Illinois has stood firm and unwavering in support of the compromise measures and of all the compromises of the Constitution.

Now, Mr. President, I have done with these explanations, and I trust forever. If I have said anything which savors of egotism, I know the Senate will pardon me, and at the same time sympathize in the necessity which has imposed it upon me. If I had omitted all that was personal to myself, my defence would have been incomplete and unsatisfactory. I could not have done less and have done justice to myself and to those who are connected with me. In view of all the facts, I submit the question whether the charge or insinuation that I was at any time favorable to the Wilmot proviso was and is not grossly ungenerous and unjust. I am willing to be held responsible for all my acts; but I wish to be judged by my acts and not by malicious misrepresentations of them. I do not claim to be infallible. I may have committed many errors, and doubtless have; but when I am convinced of them, I will acknowledge them like a man, and promptly correct them. I wish to avoid no responsibility. I do not belong to that school of politicians.

In taking leave of this subject, I wish to state that I have determined never to make another speech upon the slavery question; and I will now add the hope that the necessity for it will never exist. I am heartily tired of the controversy, and I know the country is disgusted with it. In regard to the resolutions of the Senator from Mississippi, I will be pardoned for saying that I much doubt the wisdom and expediency of their introduction. The whole country is acquiescing in the compromise measures—everywhere, North and South. Nobody proposes to repeal or disturb them. True, everybody was not for them originally, nor would they be so now were it an open or original question. But since they have been adopted, and time has been given for a little cool reflection, everybody seems to be disposed to treat them as a final settlement of an unprofitable controversy. So long as our opponents do not agitate for repeal or modification, why should we agitate for any purpose? We claim that the Compromise is a final settlement. Is a final settlement open to discussion, and agitation, and controversy, by its friends? What manner of settlement is that which does not settle the difficulty and quiet the dispute? Are not the friends of the Compromise becoming the agitators, and will not the country hold us responsi-

ble for that which we condemn and denounce in the abolitionists and free-soilers? These are matters worthy of our consideration. Those who preach peace should not be the first to commence and re-open an old quarrel. Besides, what good can the passage of these resolutions accomplish? Will they add any new force or validity to the compromise measures? They are already the law of the land, and must forever remain so unless repealed. Would it not be wiser, therefore, for all the friends of these measures to remain silent, and wait for the abolitionists to redeem their pledges to bring forward their proposition to repeal the fugitive law? When such a proposition shall be brought in, let some Senator from the North rise—and if no one else does it I will—and state that the country regards the Compromise as a final settlement; that a final settlement is not open to discussion; and therefore move to lay the proposition on the table. My word for it, any proposition to repeal or disturb the Compromise would be laid on the table by a vote of five to one. A motion to repeal the fugitive law would be voted down by a vote of five to one of the Northern men, without counting a Southern vote. Let such a test be made, and the moral effect will be a thousand-fold greater than the passage of any series of resolutions. I believe the course I indicate to be the true interest of the friends of the Compromise. Besides, any attempt to keep up the agitation and an organization on the basis of the Compromise after its opponents have abandoned their active opposition and consented to acquiesce in it, although they do not approve of it, will be looked upon as a political movement for ambitious purposes. I desire to see both the great parties acquiesce in the Compromise as a final settlement, but I do not wish to have a new party organized on the basis of that measure. The Democratic party is as good a Union party as I want, and I wish it to preserve its principles and organization, and to triumph upon its old issues. I desire no new tests—no interpolations into the old creed. If the Compromise is to be made the test of faith, the two parties will, of course, be composed of the friends and opponents of that measure in battle array against each other, and the slavery question must of necessity continue the sole topic of discussion and controversy. That is the very thing which we wish to avoid, and which it was the object of the Compromise to prevent. I would therefore say to the friends of those measures, let us cease agitating, stop the debate, and drop the subject. If we do this, the Compromise will be recognised as a final settlement; if we do not, we have gained but little by its adoption. These are my views upon the subject, expressed with great deference to the opinions of others, but with the firmest conviction of their correctness.

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